

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC372511
Inspector	Ceri Evans
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Registered person address	Blackburn With Darwen Borough Council, Town Hall King William Street BLACKBURN BB1 7DY
Responsible individual	Karen Elizabeth Barrick
Registered manager	Melanie Lisa Cogan
Date of last inspection	15/10/2014

Inspection date	24/03/2015
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Previous inspection	outstanding
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection

This home was judged outstanding at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **improved effectiveness**.

The home has demonstrated a capacity for continued improvement since it was last inspected in October 2014. The two good practice recommendations made at the last inspection have been effectively addressed by the manager. This demonstrates that the manager learns from inspections and is committed to driving the service forward.

Young people experience excellent levels of care and support in this service. Staff are extremely committed to the children and young people and they have an excellent understanding of their individual needs. Care planning and practice are highly personalised to meet the individual needs of each child and young person. Young people are treated with dignity and respect and are at the very heart of everything in the home.

Young people's wishes and feelings are important drivers for the overall ethos of the home. Staff are highly skilled at ensuring that the views of children and young people are sought on a daily basis. Varying communication systems such as sign and symbols confirm that children and young people's views influence the operation of the home. The team are continually identifying new and creative ways of encouraging participation. For example: voice of the child group, suggestion box and regular young people meetings. This regular level of engagement helps young people to enhance their individual social skills and confidence.

Young people continue to access a wide range of activities and support to ensure that they continue to make measurable progress in their development. The home has excellent links within the community and also facilitates a range of groups and social activities for young people to enjoy during their stay. This not only provides them with the opportunity for social inclusion in the local community but also gives them a real sense of achievement in their own abilities.

Since the last inspection improvements have been made to the quality of information within risk assessments. Risk assessments are detailed and updated on a regular basis. These records fully explore the potential risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and provide effective strategies on how to minimise those risks. This demonstrates that children and young people's safety and protection are given the highest priority at all times.

Evidence gathered at this inspection highlights that staff place the welfare of children and young people at the centre of their practice. They express genuine affection and warmth towards children and young people. Staff are extremely dedicated and committed to helping young people with complex needs to overcome any difficulties they have in order to live a full and active life. Parents continue to express satisfaction for the quality of care and state 'my child loves going and loves spending time with staff. He thoroughly enjoys his stays. I know he is well looked after, happy and safe at Appletrees.'

Staff benefit from regular supervision. They say they feel supported and supervision ensures they continually improve the quality of care they provide. Training and development is prioritised by the manager and staff have continuing opportunities to enhance their knowledge base and skills. The way in which training is recorded and monitored has also improved. This provides a greater overview of training and what might benefit the team going forward.

This home is effectively led and managed. Since the last inspection a new manager has been appointed. The new manager and the current Registered Manager are in the process of handing over. This has been a carefully planned transition to ensure minimal disruption to young people and their families. The new manager is an experienced manager and has the appropriate skills and knowledge for the role. He is enthusiastic and is committed to ongoing improvements to the service.

In conclusion, the home has been able to demonstrate improve effectiveness. The recommendations made at the last inspection have been met and no further improvement matters have been identified at this inspection.

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides short breaks care for up to five young people at any one time, who have a range of disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/10/2014	Full	outstanding
28/02/2014	Interim	good progress
17/10/2013	Full	good
21/02/2013	Interim	good progress

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.